The Voice of the Pack

By EDISON MARSHALL

CHAPTER II—Continued.

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"We'll rest now," Dan told them at ten o'clock. "The sun is warm enough so that we won't need much of a fire. And we'll try to get five hours' sleep."

"Too long, if we're going to make it out," Lennox objected.

"That leaves a workday of nineteen hours," Dan persisted. "Not any too little. Five hours it will be."

He found where the snow had drifted against a great, dead log, leaving the white covering only a foot in depth on the lee side. He began to scrape the snow away, then hacked at the log with his ax until he had procured a piece of comparatively dry wood from its center. They all stood breathless while he lighted the little pile of kindling and heaped it with green wood—the only wood procurable. But it didn't burn freely. It smoked fitfully, threatening to die out, and emitting very little heat.

But they didn't particularly care. The sun was warm above, as always in the mountain winters of southern Oregon. Snowbird and Dan cleared spaces beside the fire and slept. Lennox, who had rested on the journey, lay on his sled and with his uninjured arm tried to hack enough wood from the saplings that Dan had cut to keep the fire burning.

At three they got up, still tired and aching in their bones from exposure. Twenty-four hours had passed since they had tasted food, and their unreplenished systems complained. There is no better engine in the wide world than the human body. It will stand more neglect and abuse than the finest steel motors ever made by the hands of craftsmen. A man may fast many days if he lies quietly in one place and keeps warm. But fasting is a deadly proposition while pulling sledges over the snow.

Dan was less hopeful now. His face told what his words did not. The lines cleft deeper about his lips and eyes; and Snowbird's heart ached when he tried to encourage her with a smile. It was a wan, strange smile that couldn't quite hide the first sickness of despair.

The shadows quickly lengthened—simply leaping over the snow from the fast-falling sun. The twilight deepened, the snow turned gray, and then, in a vague way, the journey began to partake of a quality of unreality. It was not that the cold and the snow and their hunger were not entirely real, or that the wilderness was no longer naked to their eyes. It was just that their whole effort seemed like some dreadful, unburdened journey in a dream—a stumbling advance under difficulties too many and real to be true.

The first sign was the far-off cry of the wolf pack. It was very faint, simply a stir in the eardrums, yet it was entirely clear. That clear, cold mountain air was a perfect telephone system, conveying a message distinctly, no matter how faintly. There were no tall buildings or cities to disturb the ether waves. And all three of them knew at the same instant it was not exactly the cry they had heard before.

They couldn't have told just why, even if they had wished to talk about it. In some dim way, it had lost the strange quality of despair it had held before. It was as if the pack were running with renewed life, that each wolf was calling to another with a dreadful sort of exultation. It was an excited cry, too—not the long, sad song they had learned to listen for. It sounded immediately behind them.

They couldn't help but listen. No human ears could have shut out the sound. But none of them pretended that they had heard. And this was the worst sign of all. Each one of the three was hoping against hope in his very heart; and at the same time, hoping that the others did not understand.

For a long time, as the darkness deepened about them, the forests were still. Perhaps, Dan thought, he had been mistaken after all. His shoulders straightened. Then the chorus blared again.

The man looked back at the girl, smiling into her eyes. Lennox lay as if asleep, the lines of his dark face curiously pronounced. And the girl, because she was of the mountains, body and soul, answered Dan's smile. Then they knew that all of them knew the truth. Not even an inexperienced ear could have any delusions about the pack song now. It was that oldest of wilderness songs, the hunting-cry—that frenzied song of blood-lust that the wolf pack utters when it is running on the trail of game. It had found the track of living flesh at last.

"There's no use stopping, or trying to climb a tree," Dan told them simply. "In the first place, Lennox can't do it. In the second, we've got to take a chance—for cold and hunger can get up a tree where the wolf pack can't." He spoke wholly without emotion. Once more he tightened the traces of the sled.

"I've heard that sometimes the pack will chase a man for days without attacking," Lennox told them. "It all depends on how long they've gone without food. Keep on and try to forget 'em. Maybe we can keep 'em bluffed."

But as the hours passed, it became increasingly difficult to forget the wolf pack. It was only a matter of turning the head and peering for an instant into the shadows to catch a glimpse of one of the creatures. Their usual fear of men, always their first emotion, had given way wholly to a hunting cunning; an effort to procure their game without too great risk of their own lives. In the desperation of their hunger they could not remember such things as the fear of men. They spread out farther, and at last Dan looked up to find one of the gray beasts waiting, like a shadow himself, in the shadow of a tree not one hundred feet from the sled. Snowbird whipped out her pistol.

"Don't dare!" Dan's voice cracked out to her. He didn't speak loudly; yet the words came so sharp and commanding, so like pistol fire itself, that they penetrated into her consciousness and choked back the nervous reflexes that in an instant might have lost them one of their three precious shells. She caught herself with a sob. Dan shouted at the wolf, and it melted into the shadows.

"You won't do it again, Snowbird?" he asked her very humbly. But his meaning was clear. He was not as skilled with a pistol as she; but if her nerves were breaking, the gun must be taken from her hands. The three shells must be saved to the moment of utmost need.

"No," she told him, looking straight into his eyes. "I won't do it again."

He believed her. He knew that she spoke the truth. He met her eyes with a half smile. Then, wholly without warning, Fate played its last trump.

Again the wilderness reminded them of its might, and their brave spirits were almost broken by the utter remorselessness of the blow. The girl went on her face with a crack of wood.

"Maybe We Can Keep Them Bluffed."

Her snow shoe had been cracked by her fall of the day before, when running to the fire, and whether she struck some other obstruction in the snow, or whether the cracked wood had simply given way under her weight, mattered not even enough for them to investigate. As in all great disasters, only the result remained. The result in this case was that her snowshoe, without which she could not walk at all in the snow, was irreparably broken.

"Fate has stacked the cards against us," Lennox told them, after the first moment's horror from the broken snowshoe.

But no one answered him. The girl, white-faced, kept her wide eyes on Dan. He seemed to be peering into the shadows beside the trail, as if he were watching for the gray forms that now and then glided from tree to tree. In reality, he was not looking for wolves. He was gazing down into his own soul, measuring his own spirit for the trial that lay before him.

The girl, unable to step with the broken snowshoe, rested her weight on one foot and hobbled like a bird with broken wings across to him. No sight of all this terrible journey had been more dreadful in her father's eyes than this. It seemed to split open the strong heart of the man. She touched her hand to his arm.

"I'm sorry, Dan," she told him. "You tried so hard—"

Just one little sound broke from his throat—a strange, deep gasp that could not be suppressed. Then he caught her hand in his and kissed it—again and again. "Do you think I care about that?" he asked her. "I only wish I could have done more—and what I have done doesn't count. Just as in my fight with Cranston, nothing counts because I didn't win. It's just fate, Snowbird. It's no one's fault, but maybe, in this world, nothing is ever anyone's fault." For in the twilight of those winter woods, in the shadow of death itself, perhaps he was catching glimmerings of eternal truths that are hidden from all but the most far-seeing eyes.

"And this is the end?" she asked him. She spoke very bravely.

"No!" His hand tightened on hers. "No, so long as an ounce of strength remains. To fight—never to give up—may God give me spirit for it till I die."

And this was no idle prayer. His eyes raised to the starry sky as he spoke.

"But, son," Lennox asked him rather quietly, "what can you do? The wolves aren't going to wait a great deal longer, and we can't go on."

"There's one thing more—one more trial to make," Dan answered. "I thought about it at first, but it was too long a chance to try if there was any other way. And I suppose you thought of it too."

"Overtaking Cranston?"

"Of course. And it sounds like a crazy dream. But listen, both of you. If we have got to die, up here in the snow—and it looks like we had—what is the thing you want done worst before we go?"

Lennox's hands clasped, and he leaned forward on the sled. "Pay Cranston!" he said.

"Yes!" Dan's voice rang. "Cranston's never going to be paid unless we do it. There will be no signs of incendiarism at the house, and no proofs. They'll find our bodies in the snow, and we'll just be a mystery, with no one made to pay. The evidence in my pocket will be taken by Cranston, some time this winter. If I don't make him pay, he never will pay. And that's one reason why I'm going to try to carry out this plan I've got.

"The second reason is that it's the one hope we have left. I take it that none of us are deceived on that point. And no man can die tamely—if he is a man—while there's a chance. I mean a young man, like me—not one who is old and tired. It sounds perfectly silly to talk about finding Cranston's winter quarters, and then, with my bare hands, conquering him, taking his food and his blankets and his snowshoes and his rifle, to fight away these wolves, and bringing 'em back here."

"You wouldn't be barehanded," the girl reminded him. "You could have the pistol."

He didn't even seem to hear her. "I've been thinking about it. It's a long, long chance—much worse than the chance we had of getting out by straight walking. I think we could have made it, if the wolves had kept off and the snowshoe hadn't broken. It would have nearly killed us, but I believe we could have got out. That's why I didn't try this other way first. A man with his bare hands hasn't much of a chance against another with a rifle, and I don't want you to be too hopeful. And of course, the hardest problem is finding his camp.

"But I do feel sure of one thing: that he is back to his old trapping line on the North Fork—somewhere south of here—and his camp is somewhere on the river. I think he would have gone there so that he could cut off any attempt I might make to get through with those letters. My plan is to start back at an angle that will carry me between the North Fork and our old house. Somewhere in there I'll find his tracks, the tracks he made when he first came over to burn up the house. I suppose he was careful to mix 'em up after once he arrived here, but the first part of the way he likely walked straight toward the house from his camp. Somewhere, if I go that way, I'll cross his trail—within 10 miles at least. Then I'll backtrack him to his camp."

"And never come back!" the girl cried.

"Maybe not. But at least everything that can be done will be done. Nothing will be left. No regrets. We will have made the last trial. I'm not going to waste any time, Snowbird. The sooner we get your fire built the better."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Make Love and Live Long.

The act of love-making has a direct influence on the heart and blood, says a medical correspondent. It stimulates the working capacity of the former organ, and keeps it up to concert pitch. As a result, the blood circulates with greater strength, and every part of the body is accordingly strengthened. Love-making, moreover, has a very decided influence in stimulating the working of the liver. Patent medicines would have to go out of business to a considerable extent if the world were more generally given to the art of making love with genuine feeling. Perhaps the most striking proof of the immunity of lovers from one form of ill, viz., colds and chills, is afforded by the fact that a pair of Cupid's devotees will sit on a damp bench for hours and take no harm.

It is just as wise to watch your windings as it is to wind your watch.

Germans at the Upper Silesian Plebiscite

Crowd of Germans at the postoffice in Konigshutte registering for the plebiscite which was to determine whether Poland or Germany should have the Upper Silesian territory. The illustration also shows a German woman, eighty-five years old, being carried to the polls to cast her vote for her fatherland.

U. S. Weather Is Not Home Brew

Icy Blasts and Torrid Zephyrs Are "Imported" From Other Countries as General Rule

NOT SUBJECT TO REGULATION

There Is No Way of Suppressing High and Low Disturbances and Atmospheric Pressure Is Boss of Its Own Whims.

Washington.—People who complain about the weather, who kick because it is too hot, too cold or too windy, as the case might be, are reminded by the National Geographic society that the weather is not home-brewed.

Most of it comes sweeping in from other countries, blowing up beyond the three-mile limit without passport or tariff restrictions. Some of it might bear the brand, "Made in the U. S. A.," but as a general thing it is imported. For the most part the American supply of rain, snows, blizzards, cold waves and hot waves, tornadoes and tempests, come tumbling in from the northwest and the west. A smaller percentage, the society reports, come from the north and southwest, but now and then the wind in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic kicks up its heels and there is trouble.

But, say the learned men of the society, it is worth noting that none of the weather enters the country through the stretch of the Atlantic coast north of Cape Hatteras, the section into which pours the vast bulk of material imports, and in which occurs a majority of the main disasters on American shores.

Alaska Storm Center.

There is some consolation to enthusiasts for the "Made in America" movement, the society says, in the fact that the great majority of disturbances that enter the states originate in Alaska, or in the great warm cauldron of the North Pacific, between the Aleutian islands and Hawaii, which is almost a United States sea.

So the weather is not subject to regulation. There is no way of suppressing high and low disturbances. Atmospheric pressure is boss of its own whims. The groundhog is not nearly so accurate a prophet as a little vane at the edge of the sea.

"The areas of disturbance—'lows' and 'highs'—made familiar to large numbers of people by the rough circles and ellipses that indicate them on the daily weather maps of the weather bureau," says the society bulletin, "cross the continent usually in three or four days. Usually rain or snow falls in the 'low' areas or slightly in advance of them. The rains that occur in the arid parts of the West, however, usually follow in the passage of the 'lows.'"

The "highs" that traverse the United States have fewer places of origin than the "lows"—Alberta, North and South Pacific, Rocky mountains and Hudson bay. They usually bring cooler weather. The bitterest cold waves known in the region from the Great Lakes eastward follow "highs" that drift down from the Hudson bay, but judging by the recent winter performance there was not much drifting.

The bulletin does not explain why the last winter fell so far below the usual average, or whether this may be taken to mean that the approaching summer will break all records for heat, considering its early start.

Solons Send Pages to Witness Circus

Sacramento, Cal. — "Mister Speaker-r-r!" "This is circus day," said Assemblyman Frank L. Coombs, when the assembly convened. "I think that if this assembly could take a day off yesterday to go to the ball game it might let the pages have the afternoon to go to the circus. We were all boys once, except those of us who were girls." Then Mr. Coombs, whose suggestion was approved unanimously, gilded the lily by taking up a collection to pay the pages' admission, buy their peanuts and otherwise make the day bright, and five small boys stepping high and smiling widely, left for the lair of the blood-sweating behemoth.

Hit by Vise Frauds

Travelers in Orient Are Victims of Swindlers.

Favorite Means of Livelihood Among Minor Officials—Also Practice Money and Ticket Frauds.

Constantinople. — Swindling travelers in connection with passport vises has become one of the favorite means of livelihood of minor officials in the Orient and Balkan countries.

Mrs. J. H. K. Polly, wife of an American business man living in London, recently was a victim of this fraud while traveling on the Orient express, running from here to Paris. When the train was passing from Bulgaria into Serbia an official in uniform representing himself as a Serb inspector, demanded to see her passports, informed her that the vise obtained at the Serb legation in Constantinople was invalid and ordered her to leave the train. After protestations, he consented to accept $35 to let her continue her journey. She had already paid $30 for vises of her passport.

Before leaving Constantinople many travelers are obliged to give large sums to get vises which later may be declared invalid in this manner.

Since refugees from Russia are not wanted in other countries, where they may become public charges, few passports are granted them officially, but they are furnished with proper papers for sums ranging from $20 to $100. As these refugees are poor, they are often obliged to spend all but their traveling expenses for vises.

Another form of swindle results from the general European laws against taking large sums of silver, gold or paper money of a given country into another.

To prevent such traffic governments place officials at frontiers, who demand of each traveler the sum of foreign cash on his person. If he declares anything above the equivalent of $70, or some such modest sum, it is taken and a receipt given which he may cash in money of the country on leaving it. Sometimes the inspector merely pockets the money, or will take a bribe to let the traveler proceed with all his cash.

Americans of experience have adopted the plan of carrying only checks or drafts and thus avoid this annoyance.

The oldest form of travel swindle takes the form of trains stopping due to lack of coal. Then the train crew plays cards until the passengers take up a collection with which to buy coal. This swindle has been improved upon. An official takes up tickets and then a second official, who denounces the first one as a fraud, makes the passengers pay a second time.

AMERICANS HELD IN RUSSIA

Anna Keiser Escapes as British Subject and Tells of the Rancor of Reds.

Constantinople.—Russian Bolsheviki are bitter toward Americans, and are not permitting them to leave Russia, said Anna Keiser of Philadelphia upon arriving here.

She came to this city on board the steamer Rechid Pasha, which landed at Odessa a number of officers and soldiers who had formerly served in south Russia under General Wrangel, anti-Bolshevik leader. She declared, French, Italian and British citizens were allowed to depart from Odessa.

"I left as a British subject," she said, "the few Americans who were in Odessa having been refused permission to leave. A number of General Wrangel's officers who were taken to Odessa were shot, and the remainder were taken before the central soviet and then sent to the army of farm workers.

INDIANS MEND SKULLS

Prehistoric Medicine Men of South America Were Skillful.

Scraped the Bone With Knives of Stone or Obsidian and Covered Hole With Gourd.

New York.—Prehistoric Indians of South America had crude medicine men who removed splinters of arrowheads and stone bludgeons from wounded warriors by cutting through the skull with knives of stone or obsidian and other simple instruments wrought from copper and bronze. Sometimes the patient lived; frequently he went to the happy hunting grounds.

These uncomfortable treatments of serious casualties from tribal skirmishes still continue in remote areas of Bolivia. Evidence of this has been gathered by field workers from the American Museum of Natural History.

Of nearly 1,200 skulls collected in South America by the late Dr. Adolph Bandelier for exhibition in the museum, about 5 per cent has been operated upon. To surgeons the practice is known as trephining. It consists of removing a disk or button of bone from the skull with a saw called a trephine.

Complex fracture of the skull with depression of the bony plates must have been common occurrences during the ancient tribal wars when clubs headed with stone and copper along with slings, the "bola" and the "lilui" were offensive weapons, said the reports of the museum's investigators.

A natural procedure, they opined, with victims who survived skull fractures must have been attempts to remove the splinters of bone that pricked the brain, or to cut out fragments pressing upon it.

Warlike clans fight intermittently even today in the wilds of Bolivia and skull fractures are common. Other heads are perforated now and then in the bacchanals and festivals whooped up occasionally with great quantities of intoxicants, the investigators reported.

When the laughter and the free-for-alls quiet down, the medicine men get out their sharp pocket knives and make incisions into the injured skulls of the sufferers, frequently covering the apperture with gourd. During the operation they scrape around the wound with a chisel.

Modern anesthetics are unknown to the medicine men. They put their patient into insensibility by constant use of the "coca" plant. This also is employed for healing purposes and is commonly applied to wounds, bruises and contusions.

Broke in on the Blessing.

Weston, W. Va.—Prohibition officers interrupted Dave Able as he was saying grace over his noonday meal and arrested him on a charge of operating a moonshine still.